

No Ajahn Chah : Reflections

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Transcribed to the Internet by
Abhayagiri Buddhist Monastery

Once there was a layman who came to Ajahn Chah and asked him who Ajahn Chah was. Ajahn Chah, seeing that the spiritual development of the individual was not very advanced, pointed to himself and said, "This, this is Ajahn Chah."

On another occasion, someone else asked Ajahn Chah the same question. This time, however, seeing that the questioner's capacity to understand the Dhamma was higher, Ajahn Chah answered by saying "Ajahn Chah? There is NO Ajahn Chah."

The quotations in this collection have been taken from Bodhinayana, A Taste of Freedom, A Still Forest Pool, Samadhi Bhavana, Seeing the Way, Living Dhamma, Food for the Heart, and Venerable Father, A Life with Ajahn Chah. Some quotations come from a personal collection hitherto unpublished.

Introduction

When people would say to Ajahn Chah that they found it impossible to practice in society, he would ask them, "If I poked you in the chest with a burning stick, would you say that indeed you were suffering, but since you live in society you can't get away from it?" Ajahn Chah's response makes a point not unlike the Buddha's parable of the poisoned arrow. The Buddha tells of a man who had been shot by an arrow and would not let anyone pull it out until his questions about the arrow, the bow and the archer were all answered. The only problem was that the wounded man would probably die before he could get the replies to all his questions. What the wounded man had to realize was that he was in pain and dying, and he should do something about that right away.

Ajahn Chah emphasized this point over and over again in his teachings: you're suffering; do something about it now! He wouldn't spend much time talking about peace, wisdom, or Nibbanic states but rather the practice of constantly being aware of what was happening within the body and mind within the present moment, learning how to simply watch and let go. Meditation, he'd say, was not getting things, but getting rid of things. Even when asked about the peace one could attain through practice, he would instead rather speak of the confusion that one should first get rid of, for, as he put it, peace is the end of confusion.

This collection reflects not only on suffering and meditation practice but also gives us some insight into impermanence, virtue, non-self and so on. We hope that the reader will take this little book as a companion and "good friend" for moments of quiet reflection, and perhaps get a glimpse of the "no-Ajahn Chah" who used to say, "I'm always talking about things to develop and things to give up, but, really there's 'nothing' to develop and 'nothing' to give up.

Birth and Death

1

A good practice is to ask yourself very sincerely, "Why was I born?" Ask yourself this question in the morning, in the afternoon, and at night...every day.

2

Our birth and death are just one thing. You can't have one without the other. It's a little funny to see how at a death people are so tearful and sad, and at a birth how happy and delighted. It's delusion. I think that if you really want to cry, then it would be better to do so when someone's born. Cry at the root, for if there were no birth, there would be no death. Can you understand this?

3

You'd think that people could appreciate what it would be like to live in a person's belly. How uncomfortable that would be! Just look at how merely staying in a hut for only one day is already hard to take. You shut all the doors and windows and you're suffocating already. How would it be to live in a person's belly for nine months? Yet you want to stick your head right in there, to put your neck in the noose once again.

4

Why are we born? We are born so that we will not have to be born again.

5

When one does not understand death, life can be very confusing.

6

The Buddha told his disciple Ananda to see impermanence, to see death with every breath. We must know death; we must die in order to live. What does that mean? To die is to come to the end of our doubts, all our questions, and just be here with the present reality. You can never die tomorrow; you must die now. Can you do it? If you can do it, you will know the peace of no more questions.

7

Death is as close as our breath.

8

If you've trained properly, you wouldn't feel frightened when you fall sick, nor be upset when someone dies. When you go into the hospital for treatment, determine in your mind that if you get better, that's fine, and that if you die, that's fine, too. I guarantee you that if the doctors told me I had cancer and was going to die in a few months, I'd remind the doctors, "Watch out, because death is coming to get you, too. It's just a question of who goes first and who goes later." Doctors are not going to cure death or prevent death. Only the Buddha was such a doctor, so why not go ahead and use the Buddha's medicine?

9

If you're afraid of illness, if you are afraid of death, then you should contemplate where they come from. Where do they come from? They arise from birth. So, don't be sad when someone dies - it's just nature, and his suffering in this life is over. If you want to be sad, be sad when people are born: "Oh, no, they've come again. They're going to suffer and die again!"

10

The "One Who Knows" clearly knows that all conditioned phenomena are unsubstantial. So this "One Who Knows" does not become happy or sad, for it does not follow changing conditions. To become glad, is to be born; to become dejected, is to die. Having died, we are born again; having been born, we die again. This birth and death from one moment to the next is the endless spinning wheel of samsara.

Body

11

If the body could talk, it would be telling us all day long, "You're not my owner, you know." Actually it's telling it to us all the time, but it's Dhamma language, so we're unable to understand it.

12

Conditions don't belong to us. They follow their own natural course. We can't do anything about the way the body is. We can beautify it a little, make it look attractive and clean for a while, like the young girls who paint their lips and let their nails grow long, but when old age arrives, everyone is in the same boat. That is the way the body is. We can't make it any other way. But, what we can improve and beautify is the mind.

13

If our body really belonged to us, it would obey our commands. If we say, "Don't get old," Or "I forbid you to get sick" does it obey us? No! It takes no notice. We only rent this "house", not own it. If we think it does belong to us, we will suffer when we have to leave it. But in reality, there is no such thing as a permanent self, nothing unchanging or solid that we can hold on to.

Breath

14

There are people who are born and die and never once are aware of their breath going in and out of their body. That's how far away they live from themselves.

15

Time is our present breath.

16

You say that you are too busy to meditate. Do you have time to breathe? Meditation is your breath. Why do you have time to breathe but not to meditate? Breathing is something vital to people's lives. If you see that Dhamma practice is vital to your life, then you will feel that breathing and practicing the Dhamma are equally important.

Dhamma

17

What is Dhamma? Nothing isn't. 18

How does the Dhamma teach the proper way of life? It shows us how to live. It has many ways of showing it - on rocks or trees or just in front of you. It is a teaching but not in words. So still the mind, the heart, and learn to watch. You'll find the whole Dhamma revealing itself here and now. At what other time and place are you going to look?

19

First you understand the Dhamma with your thoughts. If you begin to understand it, you will practice it. And if you practice it, you will begin to see it, you are the Dhamma and you have the joy of the Buddha.

20

The Dhamma has to be found by looking into your own heart and seeing that which is true and that which is not, that which is balanced and that which is not balanced.

21

There is only one real magic, the magic of Dhamma. Any other magic is like the illusion of a card trick. It distracts us from the real game: our relation to human life, to birth, to death and to freedom.

22

Whatever you do, make it Dhamma. If you don't feel good, look inside. If you know it's wrong and still do it, that's defilement.

23

It's hard to find those who listen to Dhamma, who remember Dhamma and practice it, who reach Dhamma and see it.

24 It's all Dhamma if we have mindfulness. When we see the animals that run away from danger, we see that they are just like us. They flee from suffering and run towards happiness. They also have fear. They fear for their lives just as we do. When we see according to truth, we see that all animals and human beings are no different. We are all mutual companions of birth, old age, sickness, and death.

25

Regardless of time and place, the whole practice of Dhamma comes to completion at the place where there is nothing. It's the place of surrender, of emptiness, of laying down the burden. This is the finish.

26

The Dhamma is not far away. It's right with us. The Dhamma isn't about angels in the sky or anything like that. It's simply about us, about what we are doing right now. Observe yourself. Sometimes there is happiness, sometimes suffering, sometimes comfort, sometimes pain ...this is the Dhamma. Do you see it? To know this Dhamma, you have to read your experiences.

27

The Buddha wanted us to contact the Dhamma, but people only contact the words, the books and the scriptures. That is contacting that which is "about" Dhamma, and not contacting the "real" Dhamma as

taught by our Great Teacher. How can people say that they are practicing well and properly if they only do that? They are a long way off.

28

When you listen to the Dhamma you must open up your heart and compose yourself in the center. Don't try to accumulate what you hear or make a painstaking effort to retain what you hear from memory. Just let the Dhamma flow into your heart as it reveals itself, and keep yourself continuously open to its flow in the present moment. What is ready to be retained will be so, and it will happen of its own accord, not through any determined effort on your part.

29

Similarly when you expound the Dhamma, you must not force yourself. It should happen on its own and should flow spontaneously from the present moment and circumstances. People have different levels of receptive ability, and when you're there at that same level, it just happens, the Dhamma flows. The Buddha had the ability to know people's temperaments and receptive abilities. He used this very same method of spontaneous teaching. It's not that he possessed any special superhuman power to teach, but rather that he was sensitive to the spiritual needs of the people who came to him, and so he taught them accordingly.

Heart and Mind

30

Only one book is worth reading: the heart.

31

The Buddha taught us that whatever makes the mind distressed in our practice hits home. Defilements are distressed. It's not that the mind is distressed! We don't know what our minds and defilements are. Whatever we aren't satisfied with, we just don't want anything to do with it. Our way of life is not difficult. What's difficult is not being satisfied, not agreeing with it. Our defilements are the difficulty.

32

The world is in a very feverish state. The mind changes from like to dislike with the feverishness of the world. If we can learn to make the mind still, it will be the greatest help to the world.

33

If your mind is happy, then you are happy anywhere you go. When wisdom awakens within you, you will see Truth wherever you look. Truth is all there is. It's like when you've learned how to read - you can then read anywhere you go.

34

If you're allergic to one place, you'll be allergic to every place. But it's not the place outside you that's causing you trouble. It's the "place" inside you.

35

Look at your own mind. The one who carries things thinks he's got things, but the one who looks on only sees the heaviness. Throw away things, lose them, and find lightness.

36

The mind is intrinsically tranquil. Out of this tranquility, anxiety and confusion are born. If one sees and knows this confusion, then the mind is tranquil once more.

37

Buddhism is a religion of the heart. Only this. One who practices to develop the heart is one who practices Buddhism.

38

When the light is dim, it isn't easy to see the old spider webs in the corners of the room. But when the light is bright, you can see them clearly and then be able to take them down. When your mind is bright, you'll be able to see your defilements clearly, too, and clean them away.

39

Strengthening the mind is not done by making it move around as is done to strengthen the body, but by bringing the mind to a halt, bringing it to rest.

40

Because people don't see themselves, they can commit all sorts of bad deeds. They don't look at their own minds. When people are going to do something bad, they have to look around first to see if anyone is looking: "Will my mother see me?" "Will my husband see me?" "Will my children see me?" "Will my wife see me?" If there's no one watching, then they go right ahead and do it. This is insulting themselves. They say no one is watching, so they quickly finish their bad deed before anyone will see. And what about themselves? Aren't they a "somebody" watching?

41

Use your heart to listen to the Teachings, not your ears.

42

There are those who do battle with their defilements and conquer them. This is called fighting inwardly. Those who fight outwardly take hold of bombs and guns to throw and to shoot. They conquer and are conquered. Conquering others is the way of the world. In the practice of Dhamma we don't have to fight others, but instead conquer your own minds, patiently resisting all our moods.

43

Where does rain come from? It comes from all the dirty water that evaporates from the earth, like urine and the water you throw out after washing your feet. Isn't it wonderful how the sky can take that dirty water and change it into pure, clean water? Your mind can do the same with your defilements if you let it.

44

The Buddha said to judge only yourself, and not to judge others, no matter how good or evil they may be. The Buddha merely points out the way, saying, "The truth is like this." Now, is our mind like that or not?

Impermanence

45 Conditions exist through change. You can't prevent it. Just think, could you exhale without inhaling? Would it feel good? Or could you just inhale? We want things to be permanent, but that can't be. It's impossible.

46

If you know that all things are impermanent, all your thinking will gradually unwind and you won't need to think too much. Whenever anything arises, all you need to say is "Oh, another one!" Just that!

47

Any speech which ignores uncertainty is not the speech of a sage. 48

If you really see uncertainty clearly, you will see that which is certain. The certainty is that things must inevitably be uncertain and that they cannot be otherwise. Do you understand? Knowing just this much, you can know the Buddha, you can rightly do reverence to him.

49

If your mind tries to tell you it has already attained the level of sotapanna, go and bow to a sotapanna. He'll tell you himself it's all uncertain. If you meet a sakadagami, go and pay respects to him. When he sees you, he'll simply say, "Not a sure thing!" If there's an anagami, go and bow to him. He'll tell you only one thing, "Uncertain!" If you meet even an arahant, go and bow to him. He'll tell you even more firmly, "It's all even more uncertain!" You'll hear the words of the Noble Ones: "Everything is uncertain. Don't cling to anything!"

50

Sometimes I'd go to see old religious sites with ancient temples. In some places they would be cracked. Maybe one of my friends would remark, "Such a shame, isn't it? It's cracked." I'd answer, "If they weren't cracked there'd be no such thing as the Buddha. There'd be no Dhamma. It's cracked like this because it's perfectly in line with the Buddha's teaching."

Conditions all go their own natural way. Whether we laugh or cry over them, they just go their own way. And there is no knowledge of science, which can prevent this natural course of things. You may get a dentist to look at your teeth, but even if he can fix them, they still finally go their natural way. Eventually even the dentist will have the same trouble. Everything falls apart in the end.

52

What can we take for certain? Nothing! There's nothing but feelings. Suffering arises, stays, then passes away. Then happiness replaces suffering - only this. Outside of this, there is nothing. But we are lost people running and grabbing at feelings continuously. Feelings are not real, only changes.

Kamma 53

When those who do not understand the Dhamma act improperly, they look all around to make sure no one is watching. But our kamma is always watching. We never really get away with anything.

54

Good actions bring good results; bad actions bring bad results. Don't expect the gods to do things for you, or the angels and guardian deities to protect you, or the auspicious days to help you. These things aren't true. Don't believe in them. If you believe in them, you will suffer. You will always be waiting for the right day, the right month, the right year, the angels, or the guardian deities. You'll only suffer that way. Look into your own actions and speech, into your own kamma. Doing good, you inherit goodness, doing bad you inherit badness.

55

Through right practice, you allow your old kamma to wear itself out. Knowing how things arise and pass away, you can just be aware and let them run their course. It is like having two trees: if you fertilize and water one and do not take care of the other, there is no question which one will grow and which one will die.

56

Some of you have come from thousands of miles away, from Europe and America and other far-off places, to listen to the Dhamma here at Nong Pah Pong Monastery. To think that you've come from so far and gone through so much trouble to get here. Then we have these people who live just outside the walls of the monastery but who have yet to enter through its gate. It makes you appreciate good kamma more, doesn't it?

57

When you do something bad, there is nowhere you can go to hide. Even if others don't see you, you must see yourself. Even if you go into a deep hole, you'll still find yourself there. There's no way you can commit bad actions and get away with it. In the same way, why shouldn't you see your own purity? You see it all - the peace, the agitation, the liberation, the bondage; you see all these for yourself.

Meditation Practice

58

If you want to be around to meet the future Buddha, then just don't practice. You'll probably be around long enough to see him when he comes.

59

I've heard people say, "Oh, this year was a bad year for me." "How come?" I ask them. "I was sick all year," they reply. "I couldn't practice at all." Oh! If they don't practice when death is near, when will they ever practice? No! They only get lost in happiness. If they're suffering, they still don't practice. They get lost in that, too. I don't know when people think they're going to practice. 60

I've already laid down the schedule and rules of the monastery. Don't transgress the existing standards. Anyone who does is not one who has come with a real intention to practice. What can such a person ever hope to see? Even if he slept near me every day, he wouldn't see me. Even if he slept near the Buddha, he wouldn't see the Buddha, if he didn't practice.

61

Don't think that only sitting with the eyes closed is practice. If you do think this way, then quickly change your thinking. Steady practice is keeping mindful in every posture, whether sitting, walking,

standing or lying down. When coming out of sitting, don't think that you're coming out of meditation, but that you are only changing postures. If you reflect in this way, you will have peace. Wherever you are, you will have this attitude of practice with you constantly. You will have a steady awareness within yourself.

62

"As long as I have still not attained Supreme Enlightenment, I will not rise from this place, even if my blood dries up." Reading this in the books, you may think of trying it yourself. You'll do it like the Buddha. But you haven't considered that your car is only a small one. The Buddha's car was a really big one. He could do it all at once. With only your tiny, little car, how can you possibly take it all at once? It's a different story altogether.

63

I went all over looking for places to meditate. I didn't realize it was already there, in my heart. All the meditation is right there inside you. Birth, old age, sickness, and death are right there within you. I traveled all over until I was ready to drop dead from exhaustion. Only then, when I stopped, did I find what I was looking for ... inside me.

64

We don't meditate to see heaven, but to end suffering.

65

Don't be attached to visions or lights in meditation, don't rise or all with them. What's so great about brightness? My flashlight has it. It can't help us rid ourselves of our suffering.

66

You're blind and deaf without meditation. Dhamma isn't easily seen. You must meditate to see what you've never seen. Were you born a teacher? No. You must study first. A lemon is sour only when you have tasted it.

67

When sitting in meditation, say, "That's not my business!" with every thought that comes by.

68

When we are lazy we should practice and not only when we feel energetic or in the mood. This is practicing according to the Buddha's teaching. According to our own, we practice only when we're feeling good. How are we going to get anywhere like that? When are we going to cut the stream of defilements when we practice only according to our whims like that?

69

Whatever we do, we should see ourselves. Reading books doesn't ever give rise to anything. The days pass by, but we don't see ourselves. Knowing about practice is practicing in order to know. 70

Of course there are dozens of meditation techniques, but it all comes down to this - just let it all be. Step over here where it is cool, out of the battle. Why not give it a try?

71

Merely thinking about practice is like pouncing on the shadow and missing the substance.

72

When I had been practicing for only a few years, I still could not trust myself. But after I had experienced much, I learned to trust my own heart. When you have this deep understanding, whatever happens, you can let it happen, and everything will just rise and pass away. You will reach a point where the heart tells itself what to do.

73

In meditation practice, it is actually worse to be caught in calmness than to be stuck in agitation, because at least you will want to escape from agitation, whereas you are content to remain in calmness and not go any further. When blissful clear states arise from insight meditation practice, do not cling to them.

74

Meditation is just about the mind and the feelings. It's not something you have to run after or to struggle for. Breathing continues while working. Nature takes care of the natural processes. All we have to do is try to be aware, going inwards to see clearly. Meditation is like this.

75

Not practicing rightly is being heedless. Being heedless is like being dead. Ask yourself if you will have time to practice when you die. Constantly ask yourself, "When will I die?" If we contemplate in this way, our mind will be alert every second, heedfulness will always be present, and mindfulness will automatically follow. Wisdom will arise, seeing all things as they really are very clearly. Mindfulness guards the mind so that it knows when sensations arise at all times, day and night. To have mindfulness is to be composed. To be composed is to be heedful. If one is heedful, then one is practicing rightly.

76

The basics in our practice should be: first, to be honest and upright; second, to be wary of wrongdoing; and third, to be humble within one's heart, to be aloof and content with little. If we are content with little in regards to speech and in all other things, we will see ourselves, we won't be distracted. The mind will have a foundation of virtue, concentration, and wisdom.

77

At first you hurry to go forward, hurry to come back, and hurry to stop. You continue to practice like this until you reach the point where it seems that going forward is not it, coming back is not it, and stopping is not it either! It's finished. There's no stopping, no going forward and no coming back. It is finished. Right there you will find that there is really nothing at all.

78

Remember you don't meditate to "get" anything, but to get "rid" of things. We do it not with desire but with letting go. If you "want" anything, you won't find it.

79

The heart of the path is quite easy. There's no need to explain anything at length. Let go of love and hate and let things be. That's all that I do in my own practice.

80

Asking the wrong questions shows that you are still caught in doubting. Talking about practice is all right, if it helps contemplation. But it's up to you yourself to see the Truth.

81

We practice to learn how to let go, not how to increase our holding on to things. Enlightenment appears when you stop wanting anything.

82

If you have time to be mindful, you have time to meditate.

83

Someone recently asked me, "As we meditate and various things arise in the mind, should we investigate them or just note them coming and going?" If you see someone passing by who you don't know, you may wonder, "Who is that? Where is he going? What is he up to?" But if you know the person, it is enough just to notice him pass by.

84

Desire in practice can be a friend or an enemy. As a friend, it makes us want to practice, to understand, to end suffering. But to be always desiring something that has not yet arisen, to want things to be other than they are, just causes more suffering, and this is when desire can be a foe. In the end, we must learn to let go of all our desires, even the desire for enlightenment. Only then can we be free.

85

Someone once asked Ajahn Chah about the way he taught meditation: "Do you use the method of daily interviewing to examine the mind-state of a person?" Ajahn Chah responded by saying, "Here I teach disciples to examine their own mind-states, to interview themselves. Maybe a monk is angry today, or maybe he has some desire in his mind. I don't know it but he should. He doesn't have to come and ask me about it, does he?"

86

Our life is an assembly of elements. We use conventions to describe things, but we get attached to the conventions and take them to be something real. For example, people and things are given names. We could go back to the beginning, before names were given, and call men "women" and women "men" - what would be the difference? But now we cling to names and concepts, so we have the war of the sexes and other wars as well. Meditation is for seeing through all of this. Only then can we reach the unconditioned and be at peace, not at war.

87

Some people enter the monkhood out of faith, but later walk all over what the Buddha taught. They know better, but refuse to practice rightly. Indeed, there are not many who really practice nowadays.

88

Theory and practice - the first knows the name of the medicinal plant, and the second goes out to find it and uses it. 89

Noise - you like the sound of birds but not that of cars. You're afraid of people and noises, and you like to live alone in the forest. Let go of the noise and take care of the baby. The "baby" is your practice.

90

A newly ordained novice asked Ajahn Chah what his advice was for those new to meditation practice. "The same as for those who've already been at it for a long time," he replied. And what was that? "Just keep at it," he said.

91

People say that the Buddha's teaching is right, but it is impossible to practice in society. They say things like, "I'm young, so I don't have the opportunity to practice, but when I'm old I'll practice." Would you say "I'm young, so I don't have time to eat?" If I poked you with a stick that was on fire, would you say "I'm suffering, it's true, but since I live in this society I can't get away from it?"

92

Virtue, concentration, and wisdom together make up the heart of Buddhist practice. Virtue keeps the body and speech intact. And the body is the residence of the mind. So practice has the way of virtue, the way of concentration, and the way of wisdom. It's like a piece of wood cut into three sections, but it's really only one log. If we want to throw away body and speech, we cannot. If we want to throw away mind, we cannot. We must practice with the body and the mind. So in truth, virtue, concentration, and wisdom are one harmonious union that work together.

Non-Self

93

A devout elderly lady from a nearby province came on a pilgrimage to Wat Pah Pong. She told Ajahn Chah she could stay only a short time, as she had to return to take care of her grandchildren, and since she was an old lady, she asked if he could please give her a brief Dhamma talk. Ajahn Chah replied with great force, "Hay, listen! There's no one here, just this! No owner, no one to be old, to be young, to be good or bad, weak or strong. Just this, that's all - just various elements of nature going their own way, all empty. No one born and no one to die! Those who speak of birth and death are speaking the language of ignorant children. In the language of the heart, of Dhamma, there are no such things as birth and death."

94

The real foundation of the teaching is to see the self as being empty. But people come to study the Dhamma to increase their self-view, so they don't want to experience suffering or difficulty. They want everything to be cozy. They may want to transcend suffering, but if there is still a self, how can they ever do so?

95

It is so easy once you understand. It is so simple and direct. When pleasant things arise, understand that they are empty. When unpleasant things arise, see that they are not yours. They pass away. Don't relate to them as being you, or see yourself as the owner of them. You think that papaya tree is yours, then why don't you feel hurt when it is cut down? If you can understand this, then this is the correct path, the correct teaching of the Buddha, and the teaching that leads to liberation.

96

People don't study that which is beyond good and evil. This is what they should study. "I'm going to be like this; I'm going to be like that," they say. But they never say, "I'm not going to be anything because there really isn't any 'I'." This they don't study.

97

Once you understand non-self, then the burden of life is gone. You'll be at peace with the world. When we see beyond self, we no longer cling to happiness and we can truly be happy. Learn to let go without struggle, simply let go, to be just as you are - no holding on, no attachment, free.

98

All bodies are composed of the four elements of earth, water, wind and fire. When they come together and form a body we say it's a male, a female, giving it names, and so on, so that we can identify each other more easily. But actually there isn't anyone there - only earth, water, wind and fire. Don't get excited over it or infatuated by it. If you really look into it, you will not find anyone there.

Peace

99

Q: What's peacefulness like?

A: What's confusion? Well, peacefulness is the end of confusion.

100

Peace is within oneself to be found in the same place as agitation and suffering. It is not found in a forest or on a hilltop, nor is it given by a teacher. Where you experience suffering, you can also find freedom from suffering. Trying to run away from suffering is actually to run toward it.

101

If you let go a little, you will have a little peace. If you let go a lot, you will have a lot of peace. If you let go completely, you will have complete peace.

102

Actually, in truth, there isn't anything to human beings. Whatever we may be, it's only in the realm of appearances. However, if we go beyond appearances and see the truth, we will see that there isn't anything there but the universal characteristics - birth in the beginning, change in the middle, and cessation in the end. This is all there is. If we see that all things are like this, then no problems arise. If we understand this, we will have contentment and peace.

103

Know what is good and bad, whether traveling or living in one place. You can't find peace on a mountain or in a cave. You can even go to where the Buddha attained enlightenment without getting closer to the truth.

104

Looking outside the self is to compare and to discriminate. You will not find happiness that way. Nor will you find peace, if you spend more time looking for a perfect person or the perfect teacher. The Buddha taught us to look at the Dhamma, the truth, and not to look at other people. 105

Anyone can build a house of wood and bricks, but the Buddha taught us that sort of home is not our real home. It's a home in the world and it follows the ways of the world. Our real home is inner peace.

106

The forest is peaceful, why aren't you? You hold on to things causing your confusion. Let nature teach you. Hear the bird's song then let go. If you know nature, you'll know Dhamma. If you know Dhamma, you'll know nature.

107

Looking for peace is like looking for a turtle with a mustache. You won't be able to find it. But when your heart is ready, peace will come looking for you.

Virtue, concentration, and wisdom together make up the Path. But this Path is not yet the true teaching, not what the teacher actually wanted, but merely the Path that will take you there. For example, say you traveled the road from Bangkok to Wat Pah Pong; the road was necessary for your journey, but you were seeking Wat Pah Pong, the monastery, not the road. In the same way, we can say that virtue, concentration, and wisdom are outside the truth of the Buddha but are the road that leads to truth. When you have developed these three factors, the result is the most wonderful peace.

Suffering

109

There are two kinds of suffering: the suffering, which leads to more suffering, and the suffering, which leads to the end of suffering. The first is the pain of grasping after fleeting pleasures and aversion for the unpleasant, the continued struggle of most people day after day. The second is the suffering, which comes when you allow yourself to feel fully the constant change of experience - pleasure, pain, joy, and anger - without fear or withdrawal. The suffering of our experience leads to inner fearlessness and peace.

110

We want to take the easy way, but if there's no suffering, there's no wisdom. To be ripe for wisdom, you must really break down and cry in your practice at least three times.

111

We don't become monks or nuns to eat well, sleep well, and be very comfortable, but to know suffering:

1. how to accept it...
2. how to get rid of it...
3. how not to cause it.

So don't do that which causes suffering, like indulging in greed, or it will never leave you.

112

In truth, happiness is suffering in disguise but in such a subtle form that you don't see it. If you cling to happiness, it's the same as clinging to suffering, but you don't realize it. When you hold on to happiness, it is impossible to throw away the inherent suffering. They're inseparable like that. Thus the Buddha taught us to know suffering, see it as the inherent harm in happiness, to see them as equal. So be careful! When happiness arises, don't be overjoyed, and don't get carried away. When suffering comes, don't despair, don't lose yourself in it. See that they have the same equal value.

113

When suffering arises, understand that there is no one to accept it. If you think suffering is yours, happiness is yours, you will not be able to find peace.

114

People who suffer will accordingly gain wisdom. If we don't suffer, we don't contemplate. If we don't contemplate, no wisdom is born. Without wisdom, we don't know. Not knowing, we can't get free of suffering - that's just the way it is. Therefore we must train and endure in our practice. When we then reflect on the world, we won't be afraid like before. It isn't that the Buddha was enlightened outside of the world but within the world itself.

115

Sensual indulgence and self-mortification are two paths the Buddha discouraged. This is just happiness and suffering. We imagine we have freed ourselves from suffering, but we haven't. If we just cling to happiness, we will suffer again. That's the way it is, people think contrarily.

116

People have suffering in one place, so they go somewhere else. When suffering arises there, they run off again. They think they're running away from suffering, but they're not. Suffering goes with them. They carry suffering around without knowing it. If we don't know suffering, then we can't know the cause of suffering. If we don't know the cause of suffering, then we can't know the cessation of suffering. There's no way we can escape it.

117

Students today have much more knowledge than students of previous times. They have all the things they need; everything is more convenient. But they also have a lot more suffering and confusion than before. Why is this?

118

Do not be a bodhisatta; do not be an arahant; do not be anything at all. If you are a bodhisatta, you will suffer; if you are an arahant, you will suffer; if you are anything at all, you will suffer.

119

Love and hate are both suffering because of desire. Wanting is suffering; wanting not to have is suffering. Even if you get what you want, it's still suffering because once you have it, you then live in the fear of losing it. How are you going to live happily with fear?

120

When you're angry, does it feel good or bad? If it feels so bad, then why don't you throw it away? Why bother to keep it? How can you say that you are wise and intelligent if you hold on to such things? Some days the mind can even cause the whole family to quarrel or cause you to cry all night. And, yet, we still continue to get angry and suffer. If you see the suffering of anger, then just throw it away. If you don't throw it away, it'll go on causing suffering indefinitely, with no chance of respite. The world of unsatisfactory existence is like this. If we know the way it is, we can solve the problem. 121

A woman wanted to know how to deal with anger. I asked her when anger arose whose anger it was. She said it was hers. Well, if it really was her anger, then she should be able to tell it to go away, shouldn't she? But it really isn't hers to command. Holding on to anger, as a personal possession will cause suffering. If anger really belonged to us, it would have to obey us. If it doesn't obey us, that means that it's only a deception. Don't fall for it. Whether the mind is happy or sad, don't fall for it. It's all a deception.

122

If you see certainty in that which is uncertain, you are bound to suffer.

123

The Buddha is always here teaching. See for yourself. Here is happiness and there is unhappiness. There is pleasure and there is pain. And they're always here. When you understand the nature of pleasure and pain, there you see the Buddha, there you see the Dhamma. The Buddha is not apart from them.

124

Contemplating them together, we see that happiness and suffering are equal, just as hot and cold are. The heat from a fire can burn us to death, while the coldness from ice can freeze us to death. Neither is greater. It's the same with happiness and suffering. In the world, everyone desires happiness and no one desires suffering. Nibbana has no desire. There is only tranquility.

Teacher

125

You are your own teacher. Looking for teachers can't solve your own doubts. Investigate yourself to find the truth - inside, not outside. Knowing yourself is most important.

126

One of my teachers ate very fast. He made noises as he ate. Yet he told us to eat slowly and mindfully. I used to watch him and get very upset. I suffered, but he didn't! I watched the outside. Later I learned that some people drive very fast but carefully; others drive slowly and have many accidents. Don't cling to rules, to outer form. If you watch others at most ten percent of the time and watch yourself ninety percent of the time, your practice is okay.

127

Disciples are hard to teach. Some know but don't bother to practice. Some don't know and don't try to find out. I don't know what to do with them. Why is it that humans have minds like this? Being ignorant is not good, but even if I tell them, they still don't listen. People are so full of doubts in their practice. They always doubt. They want to go to Nibbana but they don't want to walk the path. It's baffling. When

I tell them to meditate, they're afraid, and if not afraid, then just plain sleepy. Mostly they like to do the things I don't teach. This is the pain of being a teacher.

128

If we could see the truth of the Buddha's teaching so easily, we wouldn't need so many teachers. When we understand the teachings, we just do what is required of us. But what makes people so difficult to teach is that they don't accept the teachings and argue with the teacher and the teachings. In front of the teacher they behave a little better, but behind his back they become thieves! People are really difficult to teach.

129

I don't teach my disciples to live and practice heedlessly. But that's what they do when I'm not around. When the policeman is around, the thieves behave themselves. When he asks if there are any thieves around, of course they all say there aren't; that they've never seen any. But as soon as the policeman is gone, they're all at it again. It was like that even in the Buddha's time. So just watch yourself and don't be concerned with what others do.

130

True teacher speak only of the difficult practice of giving up or getting rid of the self. Whatever may happen, do not abandon the teacher. Let him guide you, because it is easy to forget the Path.

131

Your doubts about your teacher can help you. Take from your teacher what is good, and be aware of your own practice. Wisdom is for you to watch and develop.

132

Don't just believe in the teacher because he says a fruit is sweet and delicious. Taste it for yourself and then all the doubting will be over.

133

Teachers are those who point out the direction of the Path. After listening to the teacher, whether or not we walk the Path by practicing ourselves, and thereby reap the fruits of practice, is strictly up to each one of us.

134

Sometimes teaching is hard work. A teacher is like a garbage can that people throw their frustrations and problems into. The more people you teach, the bigger the garbage disposal problems. But teaching is a wonderful way to practice Dhamma. Those who teach grow in patience and in understanding.

135

A teacher cannot really clear up our difficulties. He is just a source to investigate the Path. He can't make it clear. Actually what he says is not worth listening to. The Buddha never praised believing in others. We must believe ourselves. This is difficult, yes, but that's really how it is. We look outside but never really see. We have to decide to really practice. Doubts don't disappear by asking others, but through our own unending practice.

Understanding and Wisdom

136

No one and nothing can free you but your own understanding.

137

A madman and an arahant both smile, but the arahant knows why while the madman doesn't.

138

A clever person watches others, but he watches with wisdom, not with ignorance. If one watches with wisdom, one can learn much. But if one watches with ignorance, one can only find faults.

139

The real problem with people nowadays is that they know but still don't do. It's another matter if they don't do because they don't know but if they already know and still don't do then what's the problem?

don't do because they don't know, but if they already know and still don't do, then what's the problem.

140

Outward scriptural study is not important. Of course, the Dhamma books are correct, but they are not right. They cannot give you right understanding. To see the word "anger" in print is not the same as experiencing anger. Only experiencing for yourself can give you true faith.

141

If you see things with real insight, then there is no stickiness in your relationship to them. They come - pleasant and unpleasant - you see them and there is no attachment. They come and they pass. Even if the worse kinds of defilements come up, such as greed and anger, there's enough wisdom to see their impermanent nature and allow them to just fade away. If you react to them, however, by liking or disliking, that isn't wisdom. You're only creating more suffering for yourself.

142

When we know the truth, we become people who don't have to think much, we become people with wisdom. If we don't know, we have more thinking than wisdom or no wisdom at all. A lot of thinking without wisdom is extreme suffering.

143

These days people don't search for the Truth. People study simply in order to find the knowledge necessary to make a living, raise their families and look after themselves, that's all. To them being smart is more important than being wise.

Virtue

144

Be careful about observing our precepts. Virtue is a sense of shame. What we have doubts about; we should not do or say. This is virtue. Purity is being beyond all doubts.

145

There are two levels of practice. The first level forms the foundation, which is the development of virtue, the precepts, in order to bring happiness and harmony among people. The second level is the practice of Dhamma with the sole goal of liberating the heart. This liberation is the source of wisdom and compassion and is the true reason for the Buddha's teaching. Understanding these two levels is the basis of true practice.

146

Virtue and morality are the mother and father of the Dhamma growing within us. They provide it with the proper nourishment and guidance.

147

Virtue is the basis for a harmonious world in which people can live truly as humans and not as animals. Developing virtue is at the heart of our practice. Keep the precepts. Cultivate compassion and respect for all life. Be mindful in your actions and speech. Use virtue to make your life simple and pure. With virtue as a basis for everything you do, your mind will become kind, clear, and quiet. Meditation will grow easily in this environment. 148

Look after your virtue as a gardener takes care of his plants. Do not be attached to big or small, important or unimportant. Some people want shortcuts. They say, "Forget concentration, we'll go straight to insight; forget virtue, we'll start with concentration." We have so many excuses for our attachments.

149

Right effort and virtue are not a question of what you do outwardly but of constant inner awareness and restraint. Thus, charity, if given with good intention, can bring happiness to oneself and to others. But virtue must be the root of this charity for it to be pure.

150

The Buddha taught us to refrain from what is bad, to do good, and to purify the heart. Our practice, then, is to get rid of what is worthless and keep what is valuable. Do you still have anything bad or unskillful in your heart? Of course! So why not clean house? But true practice is not only getting rid of what is bad and cultivating the good. This is only part of it. In the end we must go beyond both good and bad. Finally

there is a freedom that includes all and a desirelessness from which love and wisdom naturally flow.

151

We must start right here where we are, directly and simply. When the first two steps, virtue and right view, have been completed, then the third step of uprooting defilement will naturally occur without deliberation. When light is produced, we no longer worry about getting rid of the darkness, nor do we wonder where the darkness has gone. We just know that there is light.

152

Following the precepts has three levels. The first is to undertake them as training rules given to us by our teachers. The second arises when we undertake and abide in them by ourselves. But for those at the highest level, the Noble Ones, it is not necessary to speak of precepts, of right and wrong. This true virtue comes from wisdom that knows the Four Noble Truths in the heart and acts from this understanding.

153

Some monks disrobe to go to the front where bullets fly past them every day. They prefer it like that. They really want to go. Danger surrounds them on all sides and yet they're prepared to go. Why don't they see the danger? They're prepared to die by the gun but nobody wants to die developing virtue. This is really amazing, isn't it?

Miscellaneous

154

One of Ajahn Chah's disciples had a knee problem that could only be corrected by surgery. Although the doctors assured him that his knee would be well in a couple of weeks, months went by and it still hadn't healed properly. When he saw Ajahn Chah again, he complained saying, "They said it wouldn't take this long. It shouldn't be this way." Ajahn Chah laughed and said, "If it shouldn't be this way, it wouldn't be this way."

155

If someone gives you a nice fat, yellow banana that's sweet and fragrant but poisonous, will you eat it? Of course not! Yet though we know that desire is poisonous, we go ahead and "eat" it anyway!

156

See your defilements; know them like you know a cobra's poison. You won't grab the cobra because you know it can kill you. See the harm in things harmful and the use in things useful.

157

We are always dissatisfied. In a sweet fruit, we miss the sour; in a sour fruit, we miss the sweet.

158

If you have something bad smelling in your pocket, wherever you go it will smell bad. Don't blame it on the place.

159

Buddhism in the East today is like a big tree, which may look majestic, but can only give small and tasteless fruit. Buddhism in the West is like a sapling, not yet able to bear fruit, but having the potential to give large sweet ones.

160

People nowadays think too much. There are too many things for them to get interested in, but none of them lead to any true fulfillment.

161

Just because you go and call alcohol "perfume" doesn't make it become perfume, you know. But, you people, when you want to drink alcohol, you say it's perfume, then go ahead and drink it. You must be crazy!

162

People are always looking outwards, at people and things around them. They look at this hall, for example, and say, "Oh, it's so big!" Actually it's not big at all. Whether or not it seems big, depends on

your perception of it. In fact this hall is just the size it is, neither big nor small. But people run after their feelings all the time. They are so busy looking around and having opinions about what they see that they have no time to look at themselves.

163

Some people get bored, fed up, tired of the practice, and lazy. They can't seem to keep the Dhamma in mind. Yet, if you go and scold them, they'll never forget that. Some may remember it for the rest of their lives and never forgive you for it. But when it comes to the Buddha's teaching, telling us to be moderate, to be restrained, to practice conscientiously, why do they keep forgetting these things? Why don't people take these things to heart?

164

Seeing that we are better than others is not right. Seeing that we are equal to others is not right. Seeing that we are inferior to others is not right. If we think that we're better than others, pride arises. If we think that we are equal to others, we fail to show respect and humility at the proper times. If we think that we are inferior to others, we get depressed thinking about it and try to blame our inferiority on having been born under a bad sign, and so on. Just let all of that go!

165

We must learn to let go of conditions and not try to oppose or resist them. And yet we plead with them to comply with our wishes. We look for all sorts of means to organize them or make a deal with them. If the body gets sick and is in pain, we don't want it to be so, so we look for various suttas to chant. We don't want to control it. These suttas become some form of mystical ceremony, getting us even more entangled in clinging. This is because we chant them in order to ward off illness, to prolong life and so on. Actually The Buddha gave us these teachings in order to help us know the truth of the body, so that we can let go and give up our longings, but we end up chanting them to increase our delusion.

166

Know your own body, heart, and mind. Be content with little. Don't be attached to the teachings. Don't go and hold on top emotions.

167

Some people are afraid of generosity. They feel that they will be exploited or oppressed. In cultivating generosity, we are only oppressing our greed and attachment. This allows our true nature to express itself and become lighter and freer.

168

If you reach out and grab a fire in your neighbor's house, the fire will be hot. If you grab a fire in your own house, that, too, will be hot. So don't grab at anything that can burn you, no matter what or where it is.

169

People outside may call us mad to live in the forest like this, sitting like statues. But how do they live? They laugh, they cry, and are so caught up in greed and hatred that at times they kill themselves or one another. Now, who are the mad ones?

170

More than merely teaching people, Ajahn Chah trained them by creating a general environment and specific situations where they could learn about themselves. He would say things like, "Of what I teach you, you understand maybe 15%," or "He's been a monk for five years, so he understands 5%." A junior monk said in response to the latter. "So I must have 1% since I've been here one year." "No," was Ajahn Chah's reply. "The first four years you have no percent, then the fifth year, you have 5%."

171

One of Ajahn Chah's disciples was once asked if he was ever going to disrobe, if he was going to die in the yellow robes. The disciple said that it was hard to think about, and that although he had no plans to disrobe, he couldn't really decide that he never would. When he looked into it, he said, his thoughts seemed meaningless. Ajahn Chah then replied by saying, "That they are meaningless is the real Dhamma."

172

When someone asked Ajahn Chah why there was so much crime in Thailand, a Buddhist country, or why Indochina was such a mess, he said, "Those aren't Buddhists who are doing those unwholesome things. They are Buddhists. But the people aren't practicing like that. People aren't doing these things!"

It isn't Buddhism. Buddha never taught anything like that. People are doing those things!"

173

Once a visitor asked Ajahn Chah if he was an arahant. He said, "I am like a tree in a forest. Birds come to the tree; they sit on its branches and eat its fruit. To the birds the tree may be sweet or sour or whatever. But the tree doesn't know anything about it. The birds say sweet or they say sour, but from the tree's point of view, this is just the chattering of birds."

174

Someone commented, "I can observe desire and aversion in my mind, but it's hard to observe delusion." "You're riding on a horse and asking where the horse is?" was Ajahn Chah's reply.

175

Some people become monks out of faith but then trample on the teachings of the Buddha. They don't know themselves better. Those who really practice are few these days for there are too many obstacles to overcome. But if it isn't good, let it die; if it doesn't die, then make it good.

176

You say you love your girlfriend one hundred percent. Well, turn her inside out and see how many percent of her you still love. Or if you miss your lover so much when she's not with you, then why not ask her to send you a vial of her feces in it. In that way, whenever you think of her with longing, you can open the vial and smell it. Disgusting? What is it, then, that you love? What is it that makes your heart pound like a rice pounder every time a girl with a really attractive figure comes walking along or you smell her perfume in the air? What is it? What are these forces? They pull and suck you in, but you don't put up a real fight, do you? There's a price to pay for it in the end, you know!

177

One day Ajahn Chah came upon a large, heavy branch that was lying in his path and which he wanted to move out of the way. He motioned to a disciple to get hold of one end while he lifted the other. Then when they held it ready to throw, he looked up and asked, "Is it heavy?" And after they had flung it into the forest, he asked again, "Now, is it heavy?" It was like this that Ajahn Chah taught his disciples to see Dhamma in everything they said or did. In this case, he demonstrated the benefit of "letting go".

178

One of Ajahn Chah's disciples was unplugging a tape recorder when he accidentally touched the metal prongs of the plug while it was still connected. He got a shock and dropped it immediately. Ajahn Chah noticed and said, "Oh! How come you could let go of that so easily? Who told you to?"

179

It was Christmas and the foreign monks had decided to celebrate it. They invited some laypeople as well as Ajahn Chah to join them. The laypeople were generally upset and skeptical. Why, they asked, were Buddhists celebrating Christmas? Ajahn Chah then gave a talk on religion in which he said, "As far as I understand, Christianity teaches people to do good and avoid evil, just as Buddhism does, so what is the problem? However, if people are upset by the idea of celebrating Christmas, that can be easily remedied. We won't call it Christmas. Let's call it 'Christ-Buddhamas'. Anything that inspires us to see what is true and do what is good is proper practice. You may call it any name you like."

180

During the time refugees were pouring into Thailand from Laos and Cambodia, the charitable organizations that came out to help were many. This made some ordained Westerners think it was not right that Buddhist monks and nuns should just sit in the forest while other religious organizations were so actively participating in alleviating the plight of the refugees. So they approached Ajahn Chah to express their concern, and this is what he said, "Helping in refugee camps is good. It is indeed our natural

human duty to each other. But going through our own madness so that we can lead others through, that's the only cure. Anyone can go out and distribute clothes and pitch tents, but how many can come into the forest and sit to know their minds? As long as we don't know how to 'clothe' and 'feed' people's minds, there will always be a refugee problem somewhere in the world."

181

Ajahn Chah listened to one of his disciples recite the Heart Sutra. When he had finished, Ajahn Chah said, "No emptiness either... no bodhisatta." He then asked, "Where did the sutra come from?" "It's reputed to have been spoken by the Buddha," the follower replied. "No Buddha," retorted Ajahn Chah. Then he said, "This is talking about deep wisdom beyond all conventions. How could we teach without

them? We have to have names for things, isn't that so?"

182

To become a Noble One, we have to continuously undergo changes until only the body remains. The mind changes completely but the body still exists. There is hot, cold, pain, and sickness as usual. But the mind has changed and now sees birth, old age, sickness and death in the light of truth.

183

Someone once asked Ajahn Chah to talk about enlightenment; could he describe his own enlightenment? With everyone eagerly waiting to hear his answer, he said, "Enlightenment isn't hard to understand. Just take a banana and put it into your mouth, then you will know what it tastes like. You have to practice to experience realization, and you have to persevere. If it were so easy to become enlightened, everyone would be doing it. I started going to the temple when I was eight years old, and I have been a monk for over forty years. But you want to meditate for a night or two and go straight to Nibbana. You don't just sit down and - zip! - there you are, you know. You can't get someone to blow on your head and make you enlightened either.

184

The worldly way is to do things for a reason to get something in return, but in Buddhism we do things without any idea of gain. But if we don't want anything at all, what will we get? We don't get anything! Whatever we get is just a cause for suffering, so we practice not getting anything. Just make the mind peaceful and have done with it.

185

The Buddha taught to lay down those things that lack a real abiding essence. If you lay everything down you will see the truth. If you don't, you won't. That's the way it is. And when wisdom awakens within you, you will see Truth wherever you look. Truth is all you'll see.

186

An "empty" heart doesn't mean it's empty as if there were nothing in it. It's empty of evil, but it's full of wisdom.

187

People don't reflect on old age, sickness and death. They only like to talk about non-aging, non-sickness, and non-death, so they never develop the right feeling for Dhamma practice.

188

Most people's happiness depends on having things go to their liking. They have to have everybody in the world say only pleasant things. Is that how you find happiness? Is it possible to have everybody in the world say only pleasant things? If that's how it is when will you ever find happiness?

189 Trees, mountains, and vines all live according to their own truth. They appear and die following their nature. They remain impassive. But not we people. We make a fuss over everything. Yet the body just follows its own nature: it's born, grows old and eventually dies. It follows nature in this way. Whoever wishes it to be otherwise will just suffer.

190

Don't go thinking that by learning a lot and knowing a lot you'll know the Dhamma. That's like saying you've seen everything there is to see just because you have eyes, or that you've heard everything there is to hear just because you have ears. You may see but you don't fully see. You see only with the "outer eye", not with the "inner eye". You hear with the "outer ear", but not with the "inner ear".

191

The Buddha taught us to give up all forms of evil and cultivate virtue. This is the right path. Teaching in this way is like the Buddha picking us up and placing us at the beginning of the path. Having reached the path, whether we walk along it or not is up to us. The Buddha's job is finished right there. He shows us the way, that which is right and that which is not right. This much is enough; the rest is up to us.

192

You must know the Dhamma for yourself. To know for yourself means to practice for yourself. You can depend on a teacher only fifty percent of the way. Even the teaching I have given you is completely useless in itself, even if it is worth hearing. But if you were to believe it all just because I said so, you wouldn't be using the teaching properly. If you believed me completely, then you'd be foolish. To hear the teaching - see its benefits - put it into practice for yourself - see it within yourself - this is much more

the teaching, see its benefits, put it into practice for yourself, see it within yourself. All this is much more useful.

193

Sometimes when doing walking meditation, a soft rain would start to fall and I'd want to quit and go inside, but then I'd think of the times I used to work in the rice paddies. My pants would be wet from the day before but I'd have to get up before dawn and put them on again. Then I'd have to go down below the house to get the buffalo out of its pen. It was so muddy in there. I'd grab its rope and it would be covered in buffalo dung. Then the buffalo's tail would swish around and spatter me with dung on top of that. My feet would be sore with athlete's foot and I'd walk along thinking, "Why is life so miserable?" And now here I wanted to stop my walking meditation...what was a little bit of rain to me? Thinking like that I encouraged myself in the practice.

194

I don't know how to talk about it. We talk about things to be developed and things to give up, but there's really nothing to develop, nothing to give up.

All that I have said up to now has merely been words. When people come to see me, I have to say something. But it is best not to speak about these matters too much. Better to begin practice without delay. I am like a good friend inviting you to go somewhere. Do not hesitate, just get going. You won't regret it.

Glossary

Unless indicated otherwise, the words below are in the Pali language.

Ajahn: (Thai)teacher

Anagami: "Non-returner", the third stage in the realization of Nibbana.

Arahant: "Holy One", an enlightened being free from all delusion through the realization of Nibbana in the fourth and final stage and who is free from rebirth.

Bodhisatta: In the Theravadin School, this refers to a being destined for enlightenment.

Dhamma: the Buddha's Teaching; Ultimate Truth

Four Noble Truths: Buddha's first teaching in which he pointed out the truths of suffering, its cause, its cessation, and the path leading to its cessation.

Sakadagami: "Once-returner", the second stage in the realization of Nibbana.

Samsara: cycle of rebirth

Sotapanna: "Stream-entrant", the first stage in the realization of Nibbana.

Wat: (Thai) monastery; temple

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Source : http://www.dharmaweb.org/index.php/No_Ajahn_Chah_Reflections